

THE UNION
OF
PRAYER AND PRAISE, &c.

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465

THE
UNION
OF
PRAYER AND PRAISE,
EXEMPLIFIED;

IN A DISCOURSE,
PREACHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1798.

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR
A GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

AT THE
Brethren's Chapel,

IN
BRISTOL.

BY THE REV. T. GRINFIELD.

Wisdom is justified of all her Children. ST. MATTHEW.



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PREFACE.

THE Author deems it expedient to inform the Reader, that the discourse, or rather essay, here presented to his view in its original form, was not intended, *a priori*, for the press; but merely for the edification of the Congregation, among whom it was delivered. The idea of printing it was first suggested by some respectable hearers, who were wholly unconnected with the Brethren's Society, from a persuasion that its publication might be of use to the common interests of true religion and civil society.

The Author by no means flatters himself with the notion of being of that consequence, or of possessing those abilities, which will command attention to this feeble attempt, beyond the circle of his friends ; and those who, though strangers to him, are lovers of the Gospel of Christ. These, he thinks, will have no objection to see and embrace divine truth, even in its plainest drefs.

The Author feels it his duty, by the present opportunity, to warn the reader of every cast, against the daring spirit of Infidelity which is so prevalent in these perilous times, and to be aware of its subtil poison in all the different forms which it assumes.

Various are the channels through which its pernicious and soul-destroying prin-

ciples are diffused over the world ; so that it becomes highly necessary that fervent supplications be offered unto God, that it may please Him to raise up able instruments to counteract its influence ; men, who like Sampson, are strong to shake the pillars of the idol-temple,* wherein reason is exalted above revelation, and to raze it to its foundations ; men, who like Paul, are acute in “ *Contending for the faith once delivered to the Saints ;*” or who, like the beloved disciple, are affectionate in exhorting the feeble followers of the Lamb to “ *abide in Him, that when He shall appear they may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.*”

The Author's highest ambition is to be found worthy to be classed in the lowest

* Judges xvi. 29.—Alluding to the temple of Reason at Paris.

form of the faithful servants of “*the truth as it is in Jesus.*” And, if that incarnate Lord, *who came into the world to save sinners*, should condescend, by means of this small labor of love, to communicate His blessing to any one person into whose hands it may fall; the author will have his reward, and be satisfied therewith.

KING-SQUARE,
December 12, 1798.



THE UNION
OF
PRAYER AND PRAISE.

CONTINUE IN PRAYER, AND WATCH IN THE
SAME WITH THANKSGIVING.

COL. iv.—2.

IT may appear singular, on a day of general thanksgiving, to fix your attention on a portion of scripture, which seems more designed to engage our hearts in the spirit of supplication, than in that of praise and thanksgiving; though both are therein combined by the Apostle. Therefore I beg leave to premise a few general hints by way of introduction.

The foundation of every gift and blessing bestowed by God on his creatures, is His own free and unbounded love and favour. But when we speak of an intelligent, fallen being, like man,

we must unite divine mercy and compassion, with unlimited love and favour. To these attributes of the Deity, we are bound to ascribe every gift and blessing we enjoy, or can possibly hope for, whether spiritual and eternal, or natural and temporal. It is devoutly to be wished, that the mind of dependant man were more deeply and constantly imprest with this divine truth; he would then be more fervent in prayer and thanksgiving, and more intent on shewing forth all the praise which is due to his God and Saviour. So great and free is the goodness of God to us-ward, that He condescends to bestow the gifts and blessings of nature and providence* on the just and unjust; on those who desire to† remember Him in all His ways, and on those, who, being vile and ‡unthankful, forget the God on whom they depend, and from whose free bounty they receive daily such rich and undeserved mercies. But yet, gracious and merciful as He is, with whom we all have to do, He requires a due §preparation of heart and mind in those, for whom He has reserved, and to whom He will give, the ineffable blessings of

* Math. v. 45.

† Is. lxiv. 5.

‡ Luke vi. 35.—Deut. vi. 12.—Ps. ix. 17.

§ Prov. xvi. 1.—Ps. x. 17.—Ps. lxxviii. 8.—Luke i. 17.

His grace; the enjoyment of which constitutes our best and supreme felicity, and for which, when duly received, the whole * soul is tuned to bless and praise His holy name. This preparation consists in *desire*, or, as we more simply term it, *prayer*, arising from a deep sense of *spiritual want*, and not from a wish of *carnal indulgence*. The *first* characterises a mind turned to, and seeking God; the *latter*, a mind turned upon, and seeking itself. Hence appears the propriety, and even the necessity of our Lord's doctrines concerning the New-birth and Self-denial.† *Prayer* therefore well becometh poor miserable man, who, through wilful disobedience, has lost the image of God, and with it the divine life, peace, and joy. And until a real desire be raised within him for a renewal of the lost image of God, all the exercises of religion produce no spiritual profit. But in the instant when the sinner feels and mourns over his spiritual wants and misery, and, like the ‡ Psalmist in his distress, calls upon the name of the Lord for salvation, he is heard and answered, § even beyond his expectation.

* Pf. ciii. 1. *sq.*

† Math. x. 38.—Mark viii. 34.—Luke ix. 23.—John iii.

‡ Pf. cxvi. 4.

§ If. lxv. 24.

This comfortable truth, my beloved, is applicable to every case of need and distress, into which sinful man can possibly come. * *For the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon Him*; and the blessed Saviour saith, † *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out*. I must add, that they only whose prayers, being offered unto the God of salvation, are heard and answered by Him, can rightly estimate divine mercy, and be duly thankful. I infer from these premises, and from the whole nature of our dependant state, that we cannot too frequently and zealously inculcate the exhortation in the text, *continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving*. It is as though the Apostle had said to the believing Colossians: ye have seen how often your merciful Lord has heard and answered your prayers, and by your attention to these evidences of His loving kindness and power, you are excited to thank and praise Him; therefore I beseech you to continue your steadfastness in prayer. Indeed St. Paul knew by experience, that by continuing in prayer the mind becomes duly prepared to meet every divine dispensation. The good things that are

* Rom. x. 12.

† John vi. 37.

received from the hand of the Lord, will not elate the praying heart above measure, so as to occasion, as in Israel of old, wantonness or murmuring, if not open rebellion. Nor will the evil of the day which is permitted to befall us, cause the heart that is thus employed, to sink and despair of present supporting grace, or of deliverance in God's time and way. Rather, a continuance in supplication, in the wrestling spirit of Jacob, will excite us to praise God, even in the furnace of affliction. It is chiefly owing, I fear, to a want of watchfulness over our own minds in this respect, that we are so unthankful in prosperity, and so easily cast down and deprest under trials and afflictions. Therefore allow me to repeat the Apostle's advice, *continue in prayer*, and at the same time to recal to your recollection, with humble gratitude, the many past tokens of the divine attention to your welfare. Because in this holy and happy union of prayer and praise, your hope and confidence in the God of your salvation, will be strengthened and increased, in respect to the future; even till the arrival of that great and glorious day, when faith, hope, and even prayer will cease; and when redeeming Love being the only principle in our souls,

nothing will be heard but eternal praises and thanksgivings to GOD and to the LAMB.

After these general remarks, I will attempt to apply the text to the purposes of this day, which is dedicated by the command of our most religious and gracious King, to the pleasing work of returning thanks to Almighty God, for His late signal mercies to this nation.

Manifold, grievous, and widely extended are the evils and distresses, which are intailed upon sinners for their first disobedience to God's command, and which are still increased by their continued transgressions against Him; the foulest and blackest of which, is their refusal of attention to the divine proposal of mercy in the gospel of Christ. These evils may be considered as they affect either our minds, bodies, or estates. They are likewise general and national, relative to our civil and domestic peace and welfare. To the latter, on the present occasion, I wish more immediately to draw your attention.

General and national evils are inflicted by the hand of God, on account of the sins and trans-

gressions of a nation, and are to be viewed as His *immediate* scourge upon a people. Thus plagues and pestilences, dearth and famine, earthquakes and destruction by fire and sword, are the well known dreadful instruments of the divine vengeance. I may boldly say, that were the Almighty to enter into judgment with the whole earth and all its sinful inhabitants, there is sufficient cause given Him to overwhelm it again in one common destruction. Hence, every empire, kingdom, and state, great and small, with each individual in them, has the most just reason continually to confess, **It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not*; and likewise to pray in the language of the Church, *Enter not into judgment with us, O Lord!*

Yes, my beloved, we have cause this day, and every day, to bless the God of our life for our preservation from pestilence. Emigrate for a moment in imagination to North America, particularly to the depopulated cities of New York, and Philadelphia, where a most malignant fever has long raged. In the former place, by the report of so late a date as the last month, 7000

* Sam. iii. 22.

are said to have fallen ; and in the latter, 118 in one day. While we are employed in blessing God for our exemption from this ravaging disease, let us not vainly imagine that we hold our lives by a tenure different from theirs. No truly, nor are we, I trust, so spiritually blind, as not to know and acknowledge that we are equally guilty with the inhabitants of those cities, and * deserve as great a degree of punishment. It is therefore to the divine mercies alone, that we must ascribe the glory of this exemption. But though no human prudence can ward off the heavy hand of divine indignation, it nevertheless behoves our government to use all proper precautions to prevent the importation of the fatal disease. Suffer me to bring to your remembrance the sentiment of inspired wisdom, by the pen of Solomon, † *that Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people* ; and the awful query of the Almighty by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, when looking down from heaven, and beholding the vanity and impiety of the land, ‡ *shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord ?* Therefore while we are recording the great mercies of God to this favoured nation, let us not forget the high obli-

* Luke xiii. 4. 5.

† Prov. xiv. 34.

‡ Jer. v. 29.

gations we are under, and which should inspire our hearts zealously to put off the spotted garments of unrighteousness, and to put on the spotless righteousness of God, through faith in the blood of Christ.* It is in this † glorious robe alone, that we are safe amidst all the storms and tempests of time, and shall be blessed in the eternal kingdom of glory.

To proceed in our present subject : while we admit that plagues, famine, earthquakes, and destruction by fire from the bowels of the earth, come from the immediate hand of God ; we must consider war and bloodshed, with all their devastating effects, evils which men are permitted to inflict upon each other, as also originating from the anger of God. The annals of sacred and profane history are stained with the awful truth, and their voluminous pages filled with a detail of the destructive fruits of war, murder, rapine, &c. so that the feeling mind mourns over its dreadful tales of battles, heroes, conquests and revolutions. But no history with which I am acquainted, records a war like the present, with regard to the horrid principles on which it is conducted by our

* Rom. iii. 25-

† Rev. vii. 14.

enemy, and the complicated miseries and distresses that attend it. The leading feature in most contests has been *simple conquest*, or, retaliation for some *real*, or *supposed injury*. This end being once obtained or defeated, peace has been made, and the opposing parties have been reconciled to each other. But in the present war, the principle that rules in the hearts of our enemies, at least in those at the head of their present government, is an unexampled desire of destroying the lives and property, the peace and happiness of all those, whom *they decree to contend with*. Without the least wish to exaggerate, I may likewise add, that they are actuated by an ultimate design of overturning all order in society, and of making *one common shipwreck of all government*. Indeed, to crown the whole of their falsely stiled friendship to the world, a prominent feature in their plan, is, to the utmost of their power, *the annihilation of the Christian religion*, and with it, *the present and future hope of ETERNAL LIFE*.* We need only to remember their solemnly approved, but most impious axiom, *that death is an*

* For convincing proofs of these assertions, it is only needful to refer the reader to the interesting work of the Abbé Barruel, intitled *Memoirs illustrating the History of Jacobinism*.

eternal sleep, to discern their treacherous designs in the fraternal embrace, which they give to the representatives of those countries, that are in amity with them. Their conduct towards the Americans and the Swifs, is a proof of my assertion, while their late seizure of a territory belonging to the Turks, is a flagrant violation of every law, divine or human.

However affecting to the ears of the humble Christian the atheistical notion sounds, and however favourable to these designs things for a time may appear; still let us not forget the words of our blessed Saviour, that * *the gates*, that is, the combined powers of *hell*, *shall not prevail against His Church*, the foundations of which are, like Himself, † *Eternal in the Heavens*. After all our zealous animadversions on the principles and conduct of our enemies, Christian charity constrains us to hope, and even to pray, that God in infinite mercy may turn their hearts, by shewing them the error of the infidel spirit, which sways their councils and actions, ere it leads them to eternal perdition, when, as in the case of ‡ Esau, it will be too late to repent.

* Math. xvi. 18.

† 2 Cor. v. 1.

‡ Heb. xii. 16. 17.

Unhappily for mankind in general, and for this country in particular, these enemies to God and man have succeeded so far, as to become a scourge to surrounding nations; and from their former successes, vainly to promise to themselves the total subjugation of Great-Britain, and its dependencies. To accomplish their designs, all the means in their power have been used; partly by uniting other countries against us, partly by disseminating their levelling principles through Great-Britain and Ireland; and at the same time promising assistance to all, who, unhappily deluded by specious pretexts, rise up in open rebellion against their King and Country. For a season likewise they have succeeded but too well in dividing the sister kingdom against itself; and by fomenting discord and rebellion, have caused therein much bloodshed and devastation; and had all the troops sent to assist the disaffected been permitted to land, it is impossible to say to what an extent the evil might have gone. Blessed be God, the wise disposer of all events, for frustrating these designs; first, by the power of the wind at Bantry bay, and afterwards by such a blessing on the energy of our naval and military forces, that each invading army has been either totally captured, or those who escaped were glad to return home.

It is, my beloved, for such signal interpositions of God in our favour, combined with others of like importance, that we are here solemnly assembled in His presence, to offer up at the throne of His grace our most cordial and devout praises and thanksgivings.

For a moment let us pause, and compare the many religious and civil blessings which Britons enjoy, with the anarchy and distress that pervades the whole kingdom of France, and all the countries and provinces at present subject to her tyrannical sway. Without descending to the particulars of all the past and present miseries of that extensive country, we need only to put the question, are *they* or *we* the most happy in respect to every thing that constitutes true felicity, in the common acceptation of the word? Cast your eye, moreover, on Holland, the ci-devant Austrian Netherlands, the principal States in Italy, and the Swiss Cantons, and you will find that they all afford lucid proofs of the miseries which attend the influence of French politics in every point of view. We must, I think, be lost to every just idea of religion, liberty, and civil authority, not to discern that the advantage is greatly in our favour, notwithstanding the temporary pressure of taxes necessary during the arduous contest.

In the midst of these calls for gratitude, we should not forget the preservation and increase of our widely extended commerce during the long contest, or the extraordinary blessing of God on the fruits of the earth. For these, and every other blessing, our hearts and mouths, yea, our whole life and conversation should shew forth His praises ; while for their continuance, our prayers should ascend daily to the throne of grace.

To return to the former subject : our enemies, in spite of their manifold defeats, still seem bent on the accomplishment of their repeated vows, to conquer this happy island ; knowing too well that, could they effect this, the world itself would almost lie at their cruel disposal. A year has scarcely elapsed, since the most formidable preparations were made for this purpose, from which we were led to expect that a host of plundering invaders would surround our peaceful shores. We, I trust, have not forgot our feelings during that awful suspense, or the fervency of our hearts and prayers to the Almighty for salvation and deliverance from the hand of our merciless foes. For though all possible means of defence were set on foot by his Majesty and the government, and every loyal heart and hand was ready to

engage in their own and their country's cause; so that, humanly speaking, there was, under God, scarce a doubt of a glorious issue; still the complicated distresses of every country that is actually invaded, are, and must be such, that we have abundant cause to bless and praise God for delivering us from the bare trial. With His blessing the effects of these preparations exceeded our most sanguine expectations; since the enemy, after all his proud boastings, was afraid to send even a single soldier from the misnamed army of England; and, excepting the men landed at Fishguard in Wales, we all remain perfect strangers to the very appearance of a French soldier on British ground, unless under the character of captives and prisoners. Present circumstances seem to favour the hope of a speedy termination to their mad career, by the re-union of some of the great powers in Europe, with the addition of others. Much as I deplore the effusion of human blood, I wish success to every attempt to restrain a power within just limits, whose professed design is destruction to the peace of its neighbours. Our successes chiefly depend on exertions at sea, while the continental powers are active by land; therefore we ought to unite both in our future supplications in the confident

hope that God will continue His blessing, till the enemy be reduced to the necessity of seeking and submitting to a just and honorable peace.

I am happy, on the present occasion, to record the truth of the Apostle's declaration, that *the effectual fervent * prayer of a righteous man availeth much*. Sure I am, that during the suspense alluded to, multitudes of Britons poured out their cries into *His* ears, who heareth those of the † ravens, and answereth them. And God alone knows, with what unceasing zeal His people throughout these realms addressed the throne of grace, in behalf of the King, the Government, the Church, and the State, for the preservation of all our inestimable privileges. Still I must repeat, that in proportion to the views we entertain of our need and distress, will be the earnestness of our desires after help; and likewise, that in proportion to the sense we have of the value of the blessing bestowed, will be our joy and gratitude. Those who have slight views of any evil experienced, like many in regard to their sins, will be cold in their prayers and praises for deliverance. The sinner ‡ mentioned in the

* Jam. v. 16. *comp. with* Gen. xviii. 23.

† Pl. cxlvii. 9.

‡ Luke vii. 47.

gospel loved much, because her sins, which were many, were forgiven her. Therefore while multitudes of Britons this day are expressing their joy, in the way which is suited to their ideas; the whole Church of Christ will more truly and spiritually praise and adore their mighty Deliverer.

It is this church, spread through the establishment, and all the various denominations in the three kingdoms, to which the nation, and even the world at large, are more indebted, than is commonly believed, or admitted. *They*, at the season of national distress, redoubled their applications to the throne of grace, and in the most fervent spirit of supplication pierced the ears of the Lord; praying, not only for the preservation of life and property, of temporal blessings and civil privileges; but also for the peace * and establishment of Jerusalem in the land of their nativity. In a word, being made partakers of the spiritual blessings of the everlasting gospel, it is their supreme concern that it be preserved to the land in all its original purity and power, through all succeeding generations; because the same foe, who is seeking the destruction of the

* Jer. xxix. 7.

state, is likewise aiming at that of the Church of Christ. And, notwithstanding it cannot be effected in *toto*, still the * enemies of the Cross of Christ have been permitted to do great mischief to the Church at different periods.

Blessed be the God and Saviour of all men, who has long given to us Kings and Rulers who profess the truths of our most holy gospel, and whose laws tolerate and recommend *vital* religion. Hence, with God's blessing on the preaching of the gospel throughout these dominions, we see a glorious continuation of the spiritual church, both in the establishment, and in all the several denominations of Christians; and also, among various heathen nations. For the propagation of the Gospel in many parts of the gentile world, which lay in darkness and in the shadow of death, particularly among the negroes in our West-India islands; and likewise for the establishment of many thousand converts in the Christian faith and practice, the † Protestant

* Philip iii. 3.

† If the reader should want any farther information concerning the Brethren's Church, he may consult the following Books published by them, and sold at all their Chapels in Great-Britain and Ireland:—

Episcopal church of the Brethren has been an highly favoured instrument in the hands of God. The persevering patience of the missionaries in this arduous work for more than sixty years, and the glorious fruits which have attended their labors, are well known from the accounts that have been published from time to time. Not ourselves only, who are members of this church, know these things; but various other denominations of Christians are well informed of them, and unite with us in glorifying the God of all grace, for having opened the "*the door of faith unto the Gentiles,*" and that "*He hath also to them granted repentance unto Life.*"

In reviewing the state of the whole Christian Church throughout these realms, it may with truth be said, to the praise of God, that He hath His * seven thousands who have not bowed the knee unto Baal; and who, being one body and

Crantz's Ancient and Modern History of the Brethren's Church.

Crantz's History of the Missions in Greenland.

Bishop Spangenberg's Exposition of the Christian doctrine, as taught in all their Congregations.

Lofkiel's History of the Mission among the Indians in North America.

A Succinct View of all their Missions.

* Rom. xi. 4.

one spirit with Jesus, the head of His whole Church, constitute those * worshippers in spirit and in truth, whom the Father ever seeks and delights in, and most assuredly will protect as the † apple of His eye, and the reward of the travail of the Soul of Christ. In this view I doubt not, but that the present congregation will cordially unite with me in blessing and praising the God of all salvation, for having thus far defeated the wicked designs of our enemies. Still we should remember, that after all past successes, and the manifold blessings of God upon our country ; we ought not *so* to depend on them as to neglect a continuance in prayer. All who are acquainted with history know the various turns of fortune which occur in every situation of life, particularly in time of war ; and how suddenly and unexpectedly, prosperity may be changed into adversity. The church and people of God best know the weakness and inefficacy of all human means, without the divine blessing ; and consequently their supplications are fervent and constant. I am averse to stretching the line of probability beyond the limits of revelation and sound

* John iv. 23.

† Zech. ii. 8.—Is. liii. 11.—John xvii. 11.

reason, but *neither* forbids us to believe, that to the prevalence of the prayers of the faithful, through these and other kingdoms, the recent unparalleled victory of the brave Admiral, now Lord Nelson, in a measure, may be attributed. The worthy commander himself appeared deeply sensible of the Divine aid, when he prefaced his letter with the acknowledgment, *Almighty God has blessed his Majesty's arms*. But while we unite the prevalence of supplications with the actual services of the Admiral, we ought not to forget the obligations we are under to him, and to all the gallant officers and men who serve under his command. Nor should we be unmindful how much we are indebted to all those, on sea or land, who are called out to fight our battles abroad, or to defend the country at home. They go, not only with their lives in their hand, but for the time, are deprived of many civil and domestic comforts which we enjoy in safety. With these ideas combine the afflictions to which the relatives of those fall are exposed, and the sufferings of the many wounded survivors; and we must admit, that we are by duty bound to remember them in our prayers, and, so far as in us lies, to contribute to their comfort.

To conclude ; let me beg you, my beloved, to receive this exhortation with that spirit of candour with which it is delivered ; and while I have endeavoured to call forth your united thanksgivings on this day, suffer me again to exhort you to practise the Apostle's advice, *continue in prayer*. For since it has pleased God to hear and answer our prayers at the time of past need, we may confidently hope and believe, that He will hear and answer those which we now offer up for the continuance of his blessing.

Above all, let us beseech Him to hasten the happy and joyful day, when an honourable, safe, and permanent peace shall be proclaimed ; which, with every * blessing, spiritual, temporal, ecclesiastical and civil, for ourselves and our country, yea for mankind at large, may God grant for His holy name-sake. Amen.

* 1 Tim. ii. 1. *sq.*

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